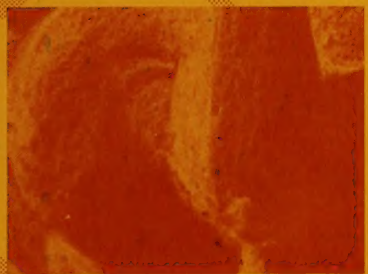


1997



Avila College Art & Literary Magazine

Spring 1997 Volume V

(skop) OE Scop or Scoep

< OHG scopf, scof

(poetry, fiction, sport, jest)

An Old English

poet or minstrel

In northern Europe (in Germanic or Teutonic territories), a type of performer- the scop- flourished from the fifth to the seventh or eighth centuries. The first use of this word occurs in Beowulf c. 496 A.D.

where it refers to wandering minstrels who provided entertainment at King Hrothgar's Meadhall, Herot. King Alfred, in his translation of Boethius, refers to "Omerus, se gode scop" (Homer the good poet) c. 888 A.D.

The scop was a singer and teller of tales about the deeds of teutonic heroes. As the principal preserver of the tribe's history and chronology, the scop was prized and awarded a place of honor in society. The songs and stories were major features of feasts and other great occasions. After the Teutonic tribes were converted to Christianity during the seventh and eighth centuries, however, there scop was denounced by the church. From the eighth century onward, the once honored scop was classed with mimes and like them was branded infamous. The term was used on into the nineteenth century, but has become obsolete in present day English. We revive the term as our title because it

refers to the creator of literature and the teller of those tales.



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Reclining Lady by Angela Wells

Non- English Major Contest Winner

Falling by Sheri Porter

M.E. Scott Award for Prose

Opportunity Knocks by Virginia McCarty

Non-Art Major Contest Winner

Mushrooms by Dan Goldstein

Art Major Contest Winner

Boats by Susie Philips

Poetry Award

My Poetry's Dead by Stacy Lewis

Printing Services

Quality Litho, Mission, Kansas

Letter from the Editors:

Stories are told in many ways: orally, through written poetry and prose, through paintings, drawings and other illustrative means. In our efforts to produce the best fine arts journal possible, we requested, persuaded, required, demanded and conjoined our fellow students from all majors and interests to submit their writings and artwork. Their voices resonated through these wonderful works and from them we chose what we believe to be a diverse range of topics, themes and styles. It was our intention to hear and to publish as many of those voices as possible. We hope you will sit back, relax and enjoy these beautiful, funny and sometimes heart-breaking words and images.

A special thanks from Sandy goes to Dr. Alex Kolker, a faculty advisor for the Scop who cheerfully, tactfully and successfully prevented me from editorially "falling off a cliff."

A special thanks from Shea and Jessica to Susan Lawlor, a faculty advisor for the Scop, for giving us the inspiration and courage to keep on going and a shoulder to cry on when things got tough.

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Familiar

On the wide front step of the Western Avenue Christian Church, a black cat lay patched in sunshine, fathomless eyes blinking lazily listening to some secret sermon. She stretched her full length, blocking those for evening service.

Not one shooed at her to go, all moving around the lean feline making a temple of their stoop, though a few glanced nervously down as they stepped over the furry line stretched before the entrance.

Her presence as natural as if she'd been carved out of the stone, as though she'd been here forever while we were passing through. Her purring content hinted she knew something we wouldn't find inside; we wouldn't grasp the invitation to bask in the dying sun light setting on lost opportunities and missed moments.

She knew all I sought in dim interiors, musty books, knew it without effort or fear. Hers was a silent, sunny gospel, a call to come home.

by Amy Sparks Kolker



Woman of India *Don Alfieri*

Pavilion

With monolithic emerald walls you rise up before me
Orange illumination greets me and beckons me within.
Your spires point up to the heavens.

Hosting kings and queens of the land
The halls echo with my shuffling footsteps.
While I haunt the meetings of the royalty.

During the day you bustle with activity
While at night you loom like a gargoyle
Your visage dominating, your towers intimidating

A silent protector like myself.
The ripples and flairs of your stonework
Rival that of the Paris opera house.

I love to climb along your roof and watch the nobles come
Though they would scorn me if ever they caught a glimpse of my form.
They wonder at how your walls sparkle in the sunlight.

I clean each crevasse and fluting with my tiny brush
So that you may glisten with the dawn and glimmer with the dusk.
You are my tower and I am your hunchback.

I walk slowly up your spiraling staircases
Letting my nails trace the delicate carvings of the banisters
Searching for my bell to ring

by Virginia McCarty

Squirrels At Random

Scampering squirrels
Collecting nuts
for Winter hibernation.
Frantic, flying, fuzzy tails
in hectic celebration.

by Marie Moore



The Hunter

AB Murphy

Pain

Fighting tears
I swallow hard and clench my jaw
to keep the blood and rage
from spewing

Shut up
Stop talking
Tormented soul
she calls me
asking me to be something else
to be easy
calm
to let the pain go

But I can't
won't
because what would I be without it
just another fucking loser with no friends

No
I have friends
As much as I'd like to savor the heavy-handed melodrama of
self-gratifying alienation
I can't
Friends I have and good ones

Still the rage is there and the tears

I love him
the love is real
but still I don't believe it
Why is it that the first person that I really love
only wants to be my friend

Why is it that a friend is what I need more than anything else
in the world
but I can't be his because I love him too much
in a way that he doesn't love me

God only a few months ago I wrote another pain-filled poem about
love for someone else
Will this love too fall away
Aren't any of my emotions real

Junkie

Looking up from the gutter
My stomach churns
I was whacked out on free base
With nowhere to turn
Delusions fill my mind
Emptiness surrounds my soul
Committing unthinkable crimes
Just to fill my bowl
A dirty, homeless, cowering beggar
Aching to get a fix
Needing and craving for a lifetime
The monsters come and go
While rage builds inside of me
My mind reverts to the solitude of childhood
Alleyways are my haven
I share scraps with dissident bums
I don't know the date
Or care about the time
As long as I get my fill
I have my piece of mind

by Matt Bolch

But maybe it would be better if my love would just fall away
So I could be with him without wanting to touch him so I could
hear about him meeting someone he likes without screaming inside:
Why not me what's wrong with me why can't you feel that way
for me

I breathe deep
reaching out for stillness

So much I want
So much I need
I hate needing so much
I carry my hunger in my eyes
it pushes people away
they fear the pulling

Dripping snot
I beat myself up and tear myself down
I'm sorry I'm not whole like you
maybe I could be
Someday I will be

but right now I just ain't
I know my pain offends you
the way I wear it
like a knight proud and shielded

I know you think there's an easier way to be,
and maybe there is and maybe you can see it but I can't
can't see any other way to be
can't see the way out of the box

Sure I made myself this way and sure I keep these shackles on
tight

but what else am I to do
make a key and free myself
sure that would be grand
but it sounds
so hard

He called
the phone an instrument of release
his voice a salve
it cools and centers
I will get by I will survive

by Alfred Upton



Glasses

Julianne Raupe



Boots

Melyssa Gautreaux

With unblinking eyes, the old man stared out of his colorless prison. The crystal encasing him echoed hollowly with the sound of his own raspy breathing. With his limbs held fast by translucent crystal, Morlich could move nothing but his face. He had seen the prime of his life come and go with the fates of dozens of would-be heroes. These knights and such had come hoping to win a horde of gold and gems, but had found nothing but death's icy fingers to greet them. The faint glow of the crystal illuminated his grave features as he stared across the cavern.

The cavern floor's smoothness was blemished with gouges from the taloned claws of some huge creature. Stagnant pools of water gathered in these gashes, and the dripping danced about the passageways in an eerie tune. Emerald scales were strewn about amongst the gold and gems. Atop it all lay the vilest creature known to mankind.

The creature's scales shone with an emerald hue that the finest jeweler would envy. The eyes of the dragon glowed a faint, sickly yellow light speaking of inner malevolence. A pair of huge horns curled up from the top of the beast's skull and a sweeping tail curved around the treasure pile covetously. Two of the most distinguishing features, and probably the two most noted by adventurers, were the three foot long talons tipping the claws and a maw of incredibly sharp teeth. Both looked far more deadly than any warrior's sword. As the dragon lay there, Morlich could almost feel the waves of evil emanating from it. Over it all there was the horrid stench of the reptilian body.

To the side, just in the corner of his vision, Morlich could see the piles of bones. Those were the heroes of the past. The armor that had failed to protect them now lay within the treasure pile. A few clinging pieces of meat still lay upon the bones. These the rats of the cavern fought

over in their tiny voices.

The green coils that surrounded the crystal shuddered into movement as the jailer turned to view its prisoner. A huge serpentine eye came to a stop in front of the old man's face so that it might look upon his suffering. A sibilant hissing laugh departed the dragon's lips as it observed the frail man.

A taloned claw held up a dented piece of steel, and Morlich could see that it had once been a knight's winged helmet. The dragon displayed it for him to see, and the claw slowly crushed it without effort.

"You see what becomes of your pitiful saviors, Morlich? They too come for the same purpose that you did long ago. All of them are greedy for power, gold, and glory, but they soon learn the error of their ways. Most are lucky that they perish, but there are some who are worse off, eh Morlich?"

Here the dragon gave the man a wink of its eye as if it had just revealed a clever joke to him, but Morlich wasn't laughing. A shiver traced itself up Morlich's spine as he listened to the dragon talk. The voice of the creature grated on his nerves. The deep rumble of its syllables sounded like gravel rubbing against itself.

The dragon gave a slight frown as its statement went uncommented upon. Looking Morlich up and down, it noticed the old man shivering. An evil smile spread across its serpentine features, its tongue snaking in and out of the gleaming teeth.

"What Morlich? No angry retorts today? No vowing of revenge? You have grown silent in the past weeks, my friend. I am disappointed in you. I would have thought that one of such caliber would have had more pride in himself than you have shown. Is this the famous archmage of the Dunkern Isles? Do you give up so easily? Ah, but then I forget. The days and months fly by in a dragon's lifetime, but they grow so heavily on you humans, do

they not?"

Morlich glared back at the huge wyrm with undisguised hatred. Long had he yearned to break out of the confines of his prison to slay the slithering fiend. He had tried, oh he had tried, but his magic had failed him. Every time he would try to break free, the arcs of lightning would dance about his own body causing him horrible pain. The dragon had placed a warding on the crystal to keep him from breaking free. He would never be able to crack the crystal.

The dragon stared long and hard at Morlich waiting for an answer. When the lizard found that none was forthcoming, it bellowed a grinding laugh that made Morlich's nerves stand on end. The giant lizard settled back down to sleep while its coils tightened possessively around the crystal.

Morlich sank into troubled dreams of his home that he missed so much. The vaulted ceiling of his library loomed in his mind, and he remembered the feeling of the books there. He remembered the spell book that he had left lying open atop his desk. It was a tome about power and treasures. He had been one of the most powerful sorcerers in the kingdom, but he had let his own ambition eat him from the inside out. Now he wished that he had never read it, for in that book he had learned the location of the dragon's cavern. He had assumed that it would lead him to riches untold. It had, but now he was paying the price for his greed.

Morlich awoke from his half sleep as he realized that the dragon's coils were moving once again. Then he heard it. The faint grating of metal on metal. Another knight had come to seek his death. The fool actually thought that he had a chance against this beast of power, just as he himself had thought long ago.

When the knight entered the room, the dragon broke out into gales of

Opportunity Knocks

mirth. The hissing laughter sounded like steam escaping from a volcano that was about to explode. Gleelessly the dragon ran its pink tongue over its gums in anticipation of a sumptuous morsel.

"Look Morlich, a would be savior for you. I think I will kill it quickly and save it for my dinner."

The dragon, in a move belying its enormous bulk, quickly leapt forward at the knight. The armored man was ready for this move, however, and ran to the side of the cavern. Pulling out an arrow and placing it swiftly into the bow he held ready, the armored man faced the towering beast. The dragon, expecting the knight to rush with his sword, had backed up and now the knight had time to loose his arrow.

The first arrow took flight with a golden streak of light to embed itself in the right shoulder of the dragon, causing the beast to let forth a shriek of outrage. The smell of singed flesh was in the air. The knight quickly reloaded the bow and aimed again. All this Morlich watched with a bit of fear for the knight and a bit of hope for himself.

As the knight let loose with the second arrow, it went wildly into the air as the dragon whipped its tail about his legs and pulled them from beneath him. The arrow sailed past the huge reptile and struck against the base of crystal with a blinding flash. The dragon was upon the knight in a flash of an eye. Morlich quickly closed his eyes to the horrid sight of the beast's fury, as he heard the rending of flesh and the crunching of bone between the great serpent's teeth.

When Morlich opened his eyes, again, there was nothing left of the knight that he could see except for the empty shell of his armor. The dragon had resumed its coiled spot around the crystal and was licking its wounded shoulder and making slight whimpering sounds. A green ichor was flowing from the hole that the arrow

had rent in the monster's scales.

Morlich sank back into despair. The knight had been brave, and there had almost been a glimmer of a chance. If only the fool hadn't been so chivalrous as to come alone. If a legion of these knights had come, then the dragon would be dead and he would be free. Instead he was doomed to die within this accursed crystal, and every brave soul that would seek this cavern would be torn limb from limb.

Morlich looked down at the coils that surrounded the crystal as tears flooded his eyes. He silently berated himself for allowing his heart to hope. Wait, what was that? He had seen something glimmering at the base of the crystal. Assuming it was just the tears in his eyes, he dismissed it until he saw it again. Carefully he looked at the base and there he saw it. Almost invisible to the naked eye, there was a spidery thin crack in the crystal where the knight's arrow had struck against the surface. Morlich tested the crystal with his magic, sending his power forth and the crack elongated into tiny branches. Morlich paid no attention to the pain that was going through his body. He had a chance at freedom.

Now Morlich looked down upon the dragon as it licked the blood flowing from its shoulder. Slowly he concentrated and pulled on the magic he could feel coursing through his blood. Morlich stared hard at the dragon to make sure that it hadn't noticed the crack that was growing at the base of the crystal. Morlich allowed a slight smile to play about the corners of his mouth, and it got bigger and bigger as his power kept growing. He would have his revenge that he had so long been waiting for.

As the cracks spread through the rest of the crystal, Morlich pushed harder with his powers. Finally, giving the crystal one last push of his powers, it shattered. The explosion reverberated through the

tunnels, causing stalactites to fall from the ceiling. A fine rain of crystal powder floated down about the wizard, his blood red robes flowing about him.

The dragon snapped its head around to face the angry sorcerer. Its eyes widened at the sight of him standing outside of the crystal. Slowly it started to back away, inhaling as it went.

Morlich stepped forward, standing at the top of the treasure pile to face his foe. He made a few intricate gestures with his hands and a translucent globe flickered about him. The dragon leaned forward, releasing a torrent of fire over the wizard. The lizard chuckled to itself over the fate of his captive.

When the roar of the flames went down, the dragon stared in puzzlement at the man standing before it. Morlich still stood, and he wasn't even singed from the dragon's fire.

The dragon's breath had struck the riches around Morlich, so that he now stood upon a lake of pure gold. Hovering inches above the bubbling lake, Morlich gave the dragon a sly wink and floated slowly forward. He started weaving his hands back and forth in front of the dragon. The serpent looked at Morlich in terror, trying to back away all the while. Finding itself pinned against the cavern wall, the dragon stared at its approaching doom.

"Well, well," said Morlich, floating closer to the beast. "Why do you cower from me, you loathsome creature? I thought that you weren't afraid of such as I?"

The dragon stared back defiantly, flexing its talons in anticipation. In the blink of an eye, the taloned claw shot forward toward the red robed figure. Morlich casually raised his hand, deflecting the mighty blow. The dragon stared at him in amazement. Deciding that at the present rate it wouldn't get out of the cavern alive, the dragon tried another tactic. Begging.

"Morlich, I have always thought you powerful, how might I serve thee?" Morlich looked at the wyrm with a shrewd gaze and then broke out into laughter.

"You stupid snake! You have already begun to serve me, and you will serve me in the days ahead."

The dragon looked at the wizard as if he had gone mad. Then he noticed a heaviness in his claw. Looking down, he saw that his talons had turned to stone. Slowly the grayness of stone was creeping up his arm. It was hard to hold the limb up anymore.

"Morlich!" the dragon screeched, causing more stalactites to fall from the ceiling of the cavern.

The grayness continued to spread across the dragon's body. Morlich watched his spell take its course with a sense of glee. Standing before him was an immense granite statue of a dragon. The look of terror on the serpent's face suited it well.

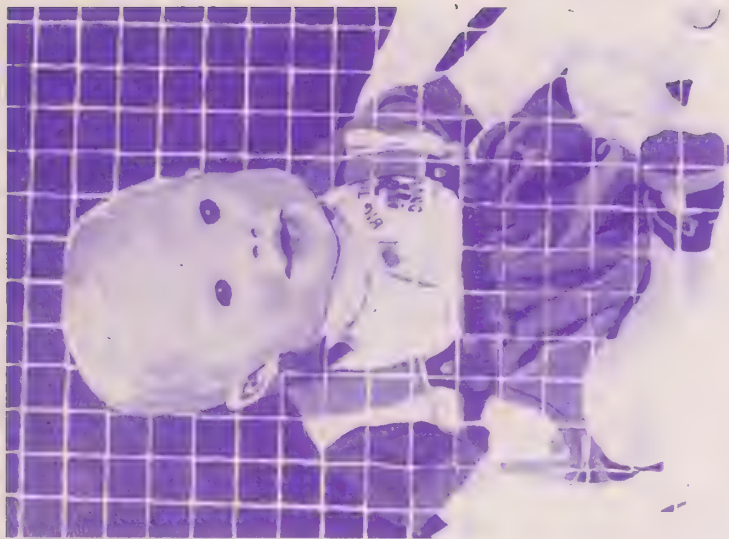
Turning from the statue, Morlich looked at the treasure horde of the dragon. He quickly scattered dust around its parameter and it began to shrink. He loaded it into his small sack and tied it to his belt. The treasure here would serve to build his library back.

Walking to the entrance of the cave, he paused. Turning back to the statue he scattered dust about its base, causing it to shrink also. Slowly it reached the size where he could hold it in the palm of his hand. Chuckling, he placed it deep within a pocket of his robes. He could always use another bookend for his library.





Alec *Melyssa Gauthier*



Max *Debbie Seigler*

Falling

smugly over-confident
velvet helmet snug
sorrel steed circles
clearing rails
on wings of grace

in an eyeblink
catastrophe explodes
bones crack
on hard dirt
life turns a somersault

hot pain
swells into fear
labored breath
from shaken lungs
raspy through tears

only fools boast control
Fate's spiny fingers
yank the strings
tangling tidy plans into
knots of frustration

in an eyeblink life
turns a somersault
by *Sheri G. Porter*



Sara

Dean Day



Pullover

Loi Niemier

New Thought

Morality is a dying term,
An empty word for an ancient mind:
There's no wrong, relativists affirm,
Only ceaseless rights of every kind.

It's all right to kill or steal—
What you think is good enough:
Life is just a struggling deal,
Meant for nothing but new stuff.

Life is merely an illusion,
A drunk man's dream, and then it stops;
Kind behavior and compassion
Are words for foolish human mops.

So destroy the least and the small,
Dream of gold and slay your neighbors:
For there's no truth, only rights, that's all.

by *Tiffany Leigh Bratton*

Girl at 14

Between her mother's denial
and her boyfriend's coercion
she gazes through frightened eyes.

She abandons her homework and
sleepover pizza parties to hang
at the local drughouse—
No one notices.

For the soccer goals she never scored,
she slips sterling silver necklaces
into coat pockets laced with tobacco.

Moves from store to store
until her pockets are full—
No one notices.

At midnight
while her mother lies unconscious

in a bed of alcohol,
she crawls through her bedroom window
into the back end of a beat-up van.
Spreads her legs to strangers
for twenty dollar bills—

No one notices.

She points the needle to the faint blue streak.
Thinking of her father's abandonment,
shoots herself with another hit
of heroin's sweet embrace.

No one notices.

Her mother screams insults—
"worthless no-good whore."

Her boyfriend pushes her head
further into the lap of belongingness.

Between life and death
she gazes through her frightened eyes.
Does she see her beginning or end?

by Gail Trudeau

Mondays

Alarm buzzing, echoing in my ear
Drowsily awakening

Cold shower revives

Morning news offers gloom and despair

Weather outside is cold and gray

Moods of people are somber

No one wants to be where they are

Thoughts of the weekend loom in their minds

Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock

Minutes prod along in an endless day

Work piles up

Adrenaline runs low

Gum stuck to your shoe

A flat tire on the freeway

Roof leaking, souls aching

A test you forgot to study for

Apprehension, distress

Anxiously awaiting tomorrow

by Matt Bolch



Figure of a Lady

Don Alfieri

Waste

Mother Earth in all her beauty
Captivates the soul
As a gentle breeze blows
I gaze in wide wonder
To the splendor of the land
Mountains take my breath away
Tall redwoods show my insignificance
Oceans transport me to another place
The salt air caresses my cheek
As my feet embrace the warmth of the sand
The solitary silence of the desert
I reflect my place in life
I turn my back briefly
Then turn around to find
My mother violated
With only waste left behind
Oceans and Bays filled with toxins and debris
Forests go through genocide
The government prevents us
From helping her in her plight
So difficult to change a mindset
So Expensive to purify our souls
The long-term future
Doesn't concern us
What will our children do?
How will they survive?
They're left with our problem
While we rot away and die

by Matt Bolch

My Poetry's Dead

I can't write Poetry
Only Prose
My poetry died mysteriously
Last week
Under my nose
I yelled at rhyme
I cursed at meter
Threw some stanzas at the wall
Cried vivid verbs into my body pillow
Got closure
And wrote a novella

by Stacy Lewis



Black Stone

Susie Philips



Mushrooms

Dan Goldstein

I Will Meet You There

When there comes a time upon this earth
That we see each other our very last
A time where we reflect upon
The pleasant trifles of the past.

Fear not to lose my love
Because of gray hair and old age
Your wisdom has been a gift
Not to be rivaled by the wisest sage.

You hold a wealth of knowledge
Of tales long gone by
Soon, weaver of tales, you leave
To rest where angels fly.

When I was younger it seemed
You glowed with a heavenly light
Protective and loving
You kept away the darkening night.

Radiating love you cared
And together we now stand
I knew I'd never falter
Under your loving hand.

And now I look upon you
Changed by the years
The one who helped and comforted me
And brushed away the tears.

I cannot let you go alone
But alas you cannot stay
So together, hand in hand
We will find our way.

When we leave this earth
We go I know not where
But you may rest assured
I will meet you there.

by Virginia McCarty



Guitar Player

Liede Montgomery

In her darkened study, Shayla sat staring at the screen of her computer. She felt the same quiet, tired sense of elation she always felt when a project was completed. The masterpiece lurked inside her modem waiting, patiently, to be awakened. She had a sense that it was too much, too large to ever be used as it was. Several modifications would still have to be made. As she gulped lukewarm coffee, her mind screen spiraled back in time bringing up the visualizations of past achievements and past pains.

In childhood, Mama had warned Shayla that she must be careful of displaying her gift, that its power could hurt Shayla, ultimately. Her mother was a simple woman who lacked her daughter's gigantic intelligence but possessed a "mother wit" that knew no boundaries. Mama thought with her heart, not her head. As a child, Shayla had been laughed at and reviled until she'd learned to only let a surface glimmer of knowledge glow. The rest was a giant iceberg with most

remaining under the waves; only the icy tip was visible. At birth, she'd given everyone a scare by smiling, winningly, when she was laid in her mother's arms. When she was five, for a science fair project, she'd brought her Irish Setter, Molly, to class at the gifted school she attended. Shayla had explained the breeding procedures to a rapt classroom. Her teacher, Mrs. Reed, had recognized exceptionality, even in a class of prodigies. Shayla had given the valedictorian speech for her high school Science at ten and received her Masters in Science at thirteen. Her doctoral thesis had set the computer world on its ear, but life was hard when you were different from everyone else. There had been few friends and hours filled with the isolation of being a freak.

Wearily refocusing on the screen,

she took another taste of the bitter black coffee. This new program would have to be adjusted before she submitted it to her agent, Tom, for publication. He had jokingly suggested that for her next project she should do something like a magic eight ball, something for fun. "You know, Shay, like, 'Will Jim ask me to Prom?' and you shake it up and 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Maybe' appears. Of course, it would have to be a little more complex. You'd make a munt, Honey, with all those people who dial the Psychic Hotline two million times a day. "They'd both had a chuckle, but that

conversation had put her at her computer the next morning, thinking. Two days had passed, and, as usual when she was creating, she'd barely eaten and hadn't slept while she entered the data feverishly. The computations alone had taken sixteen hours. Taking a sip of steaming coffee from her earthenware mug, Shayla debated what question to ask in order to test the capabilities of her newest creation. Perhaps she should call Tom and let him present the conundrum. It was his idea after all. But this baby was too new. She still wanted to savor it for herself. Pondering only lasted a moment. Inside, she knew what she longed to ask. The same question that had haunted every human heart: "How long do I have?" Setting aside the cup, she keyboarded, "Will I live a long life?"

"No," came the answer, instantly.

"Will I die a natural death?"

"No."

"Will I be killed?"

"Yes."

"Will someone I know kill me?"

"No." Shayla paused, her fingers hovering above the keys.

"Will something I know kill me?"

"Yes."

Impatiently pushing back a panel

of her fine brown hair, she took another sip

of coffee and gave a quick chuckle. "How interesting," she mused. The cushioned office chair creaked as she leaned back and squeezed the bridge of her nose in a hard pincer grasp. Since the answers were limited to affirmative or negative or undecided, she could sit at her computer all night before she chanced upon the specific cause of death. Efficiently, her mind began to click off possibilities. One by one, she reviewed them at lightning speed. Finally, she leaned forward and typed, "My compassion?"

"No."

She sighed heavily and tried

again, "My skepticism?"

"No."

"My fear?"

"No."

"My intelligence?"

"Yes."

Laughter, an explosive blast, burst from Shayla's mouth, and she clapped her hand over it. She bit her lower lip while grinning ruefully and leaned back in the chair again. Hugging her knees to her chest in an unconsciously protective gesture, she thought about how ironic life was; her "greatest strength was also her greatest

weakness. It had always been so. She was passingly attractive with short brown hair, big blue eyes, and a stubborn chin. Men had looked, but none had made it past the initial conversation. (Mama had forgotten to mention that men had especially sensitive antennae and could see past her best disguises.) Now it seemed her mind, that hulking giant, would also be the cause of her untimely death. Again, the possibilities were endless, but she felt the wheels begin to turn without volition. Her fingers typed, "Will it be soon?"

"Yes."

"Can I prevent this?"

"No."

Fighting Fear

Suddenly the room seemed stuffy. She felt the need to open a window, but she sat unmoving, unable to move except for her quaking fingers. Her heart was pounding wildly. "Will it be today?"

"Yes."

With a ragged breath, Shayla grabbed her mouse. Clicking frantically to Exit, she by-passed the print option and sat staring at a blank turquoise field of vision. Sheaves of spasmodically-written formulas littered the desk, and she began to number and sort them. Anything to keep busy. For the first time in her life, she wanted to be wrong. If only her calculations had held a hint of indecision, a stroke of

misinterpretation. It was wishful thinking. As she coursed through the logarithms and formulas that had helped to form her probability theories, her mind kept jumping ahead. What would be the actual cause?

She wished she weren't afraid to ask the eight ball program. "This is silly," she thought suddenly. "I'm healthy as a horse as Mama would say. There's no reason for this alarm." If only she could find the glitch in the program; she renewed her feverish refiguring. Finally, no longer able to deny the perfection of the calculations, Shayla put the papers in a neat pile on the corner of the large oak desk.

"Perhaps," she thought suddenly, "it's possible to beat The Grim Reaper." She'd stay right where she was all day and do nothing that remotely could be dangerous. Minutes passed like years. She was afraid to turn on her computer, too many electrical dangers. She was afraid to get dressed; she might trip and hit her head. Fear had dominion and it possessed her.

Through the long hours, convoluted, illogical, and defeating thoughts kept running through her mind. She kept thinking, "Why me?" What had she done to deserve this? She hadn't hurt

anyone; she hardly saw anyone to hurt. She had no friends really. She'd always been too busy for friends, for a cat, even for a plant. Her life was without love and without meaning.

Eventually, it was her cup of coffee that broke the camel's back. She had to go to the bathroom. Tears trickled down her cheeks as her exhausted limbs came to life shaking from anxiety, sleeplessness, and hypoglycemia. After fumbling her way to the bathroom, she was soon done, and a little physical and emotional relief filled her spirit. She longed to sleep. No, her last few hours on Earth wouldn't be spent sleeping! Ideas, dreams, unfulfilled thoughts overcame her, and she rushed to her cordless phone. Sobbing, she dialed her mother.

"Hello?"

"Mama? Oh Mama. Please help me! I'm so scared. There's so much I want to say. I'm sorry if I've disappointed you because you don't have grandchildren. You've always been so supportive, even when it was obvious how difficult. . . . I wish I had taken your advice about high school and waited. I wish you were here and could hug me. Why didn't you hug me more when I was little? I was too busy, wasn't I? Always rushing around, always on the computer. What's going to happen to you in all this? Will you. . . do you think you could get old Mrs. Sherman to sing 'Amazing Grace?' I just know you could if. . ."

"Shayla? Honey, what's wrong? Sit down, blow your nose, and take a deep breath. I've never heard you carry on like this. Honey, you're scaring your own mother. Now, tell me what's wrong from the beginning." Automatically, Shayla obeyed. It felt wonderful to unburden herself. When she'd finished, she realized how bizarre it all sounded. Would her mother believe her, understand her, help

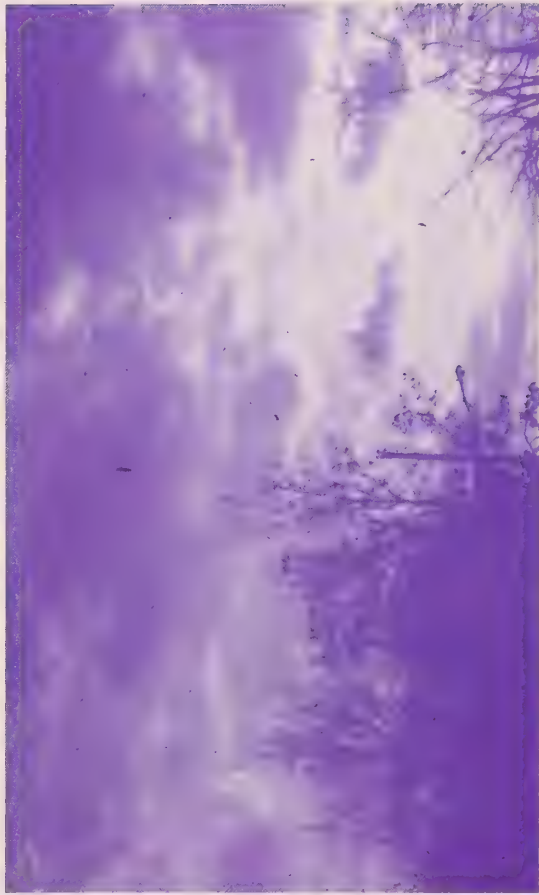
her? There was a moment of silence at the other end as her mother sorted all the information. "Well," her mother finally started, "do you feel better? I bet you do. You poor thing. Whatever got into you to do something like that crazy program? I think you should just get rid of it. Once it's gone, it can't hurt you anymore, can it? Is there a way to erase it?"

"Yes, Mama, but what if its power exists even if it doesn't?"

"Life doesn't work that way, Honey. Once something no longer exists, it's our minds that carry on its power. You'll just have to convince yours that there's nothing to be afraid of, and there won't be. If you don't believe in the ghosts, they can't scare you. I'll stay on the line while you get rid of that silly thing. Do it right now."

Flipping on the power switch, Shayla booted up the program and proceeded with a deletion process. She kept thinking she should feel some sort of sadness, all those wasted hours, but all she felt was relief. As the last bit of information disappeared, Shayla carried the pages of note paper to her living room. Kneeling by the stone fireplace, she placed them on the grill, lifted a long match from a bronze cricket box, and struck it on the stones. "What are you doing sweetie?" her mother asked.

"I'm burning my notes, Mama. You were right. It's very cathartic, all this erasing and burning." Watching as flames quickly consumed all the papers, Shayla's pulse slowed to normal, her breathing relaxed. It was over.



End to a Long Day

Jessica Brice



Lady Sketch

Angela Wello

Absence

She walks with a pain in her heart
Not knowing where it's from
She sits alone in the dark
Only hoping he will come

Dreams shattered like a mirror
Shards of glass cut deep
Hoping to shut out the terror
But it's only memories that keep

The years raped from her
Only sorrow left within
She hopes one day to find a cure
She knows it's not with him

by Matt Bolch

Waterfall

a thousand candlelights
in my soul there are treasures locked away
an open road paved by inspiration
sounds of Spring in a morning's rain
truth of knowledge brings me pain
float my fingers down your ivory skin
chasing after the light until darkness fades away

wake me from slumber my eyes they long to see
cascading waterfalls from eternal springs
set my soul spirit free

waters falling from the gutters of my soul
a fool standing there soaked by the rains
a stabbing to his heart enables the pain
stings like salt to a wound
a heart is a fragile thing
letting someone too close can be dangerous
a time bomb waiting to explode

by Matt Bolch



A Peer Through Time

Jessica Brice

The Dark

I am that which replaces the shades of violet on the horizon in the west

I am that which makes up all silhouettes.

With talons of darkness I spread across the barren landscape

All who see me know there is no escape.

With gossamer wings made of night's still shadows I soar across the roads and meadows.

I am that which has been twisted beyond the light

I am that which brings clutching tendrils of fright.

Animals often are startled to find themselves within my gnarled and twisted clutch

Many shiver at my cold and ghastly touch.

My arms protrude to the very ends of the earth

I am that which gave night its birth.

And as you feel the power of this dark hand

Know you this: I am Strahd, I am the land.

by Virginia McCarty



Eagle Kachina Dancer

Shen Lauffer

The Last Hope

Emperors cry and peasants mourn
as the last hope for humankind
fades away.

Along the city streets clangs the remnant
of a great and noble idea.

In the hearts of men and women,
this idea is already vanishing:

no longer does friend trust friend,

or man love woman—the course has been set.

At the depth of being, the illustrious design

Divorce

Reality

Childhood ending

Secure little world engulfed in the perils of a dark underworld

Things aren't as they seem

Dad's not around anymore

Who's to blame?

Take for granted those little moments

Lost forever

No sit-down family dinners

No talks after a hard day

No falling asleep in front of the television

Uneasiness

Playing the game of favorites

Resentment

Questioning

A tarnished life

Distance grows between parent and child

So different now, they don't know, don't care

Who does the work in this new situation?

The child grown up

Striving to achieve where they failed—or gave up

Alone

by Matt Bolch

intended for all

has been replaced with a counterfeit concept:
once fearless neighbors, now foes,
life will never again be the same.

Man is now master of the great void:

In his mind he has risen to excellence,
in truth he has fallen to the lowest depth
which existence allows.

Man shares his reign with woman,
the partner of his folly.

Career and money are the new gods
in the universal peril:

the innocent are blamed for the destruction
and the guilty are revered as the righteous.

Evil is now present in the human spirit.

Love is no longer the purpose of Being, hate
has taken care of that.

Prestige, power, and possession
are the focus of human desire;

kindness, peace, and happiness are gone.

False ambition has made life empty and bleak.

Purity is blemished and justice has fled.

Corruption is the mold from whence humanity now
springs.

Compassion for others has met its demise;
judgment and condemnation preside.

What was once united has disengaged.

Man and woman will not survive here for long.

Their spirits were intended for goodness,
their hearts for praise;

love was made supreme, kindness was the path;
joy was created with the perfection
of humankind in mind.

But these ideals were disregarded

by the same creatures they were supposed to serve:
humankind has inflicted the fatal wound—

none other is at fault.

by Tiffany Leigh Bratton

Soggy Cold Cereal

a rock among a world of monumental boulders
engulfing the eye
bending and shaping like silly putty
saturday morning cartoons
soggy cold cereal
worn-out jeans with holes in the knees and a dirty t-shirt
"I didn't break grandma's window"
riding my bike until the street lights come on
"cuz that's when the monsters come out"
playing hot-box in the blazing sun
running through a sprinkler on the drenched, saturated grass
with the freedom of summer looming in the air
a quenching glass of kook-aid awaits
isolation
standing in a lonely barren desert
friends lost in a whirlwind of dust
sadness surrounds my new setting
fear, confusion, anxiety
a prisoner awaiting a death sentence
"you can sit here if you want"
the acceptance of a friend bonds for life
the bedroom offers seclusion, imagination runs, wild
wishes that don't come true
hopes and dreams
snuffed out like a candle on a lonely night
a secluded island cradles the carefree "get-along-gang"
no one else exists
outside reality is harsh
new experiences are awkward and terrifying
behind the wheel of a beast
lying awake at night wondering about girls, and what's cool
sweating, enduring
"god damit we'll do it 'till we get it right"
a long hard practice that offers refuge and joy
a place to feel free and succeed

The Fallen Ones

Once up in the heights of glory
Sent so they might die
Underneath a white cross and flag
Is where so many lie.
The living ones remember
And none wish to hear their tales
They are never listened to
Treated as if they've failed.
The glory of their younger days
Buried in their hearts will stay
A time of remembrances
Where lovers were called away
Taking up arms for their country
Against a horde of foes
But does anyone remember
Those who died so long ago?
A day is named for them
But why should gratitude last just a day?
It should last forever
And never go away.

by Virginia McCarty

a canyon with its ups and downs
reveals the struggles of everyday life

intoxication

heart breaks

"why can't we be friends"

the night becomes a haven

late night interludes

smokey shadows subdue sensations

a cup of coffee and deep conversations

bonding with friends

a harsh reality looms in the horizon

responsibility, identity, rebirth, death

by Matt Bolch

Lilies

I am tree lined and mini skirted,
jabberwocked and onion scented.

My still life holds the moon
and roses bloom with hard rock candy.

I devour my vegetables

and milk my independence.

by Alfred Cotton



Flowers

LeAnn Hollis

Peter's life was a continuous struggle to overcome obstacles. He worked full-time in the advertising department at a popular magazine, had a beautiful wife, and a comfortable home. But his daily activities squelched his ambitions. He wanted to open his own shop and specialize in antiques. Family obligations and a fear of the unknown were what outweighed his desire to follow his dream. A recent article printed in the

magazine said that money has a mysterious power to confine a person into a life-style which can lead to a lack of fulfillment.

Peter reflected on this statement as he meticulously scanned a stack of ad copy for printing errors. He remembered his youth, how he used to wonder what he would be doing when he reached his mid-thirties. When he was a child, he imagined that he would one day be a wealthy and distinguished business man (with a passport and a collection of stories about his world-wide travels). This was not Peter's reality. Instead of realizing his childhood fantasies, he chose to marry at age seventeen. He was not able to attend college because his wife became ill shortly after their marriage. Peter took a job to support them and to earn the money to pay off the doctor bills. His wife eventually recovered, but Peter never stopped working.

He had spent the past ten years at a job that gave him a sufficient income, good benefits, but no hope to live the life he truly desired to live. In order to survive, he was expected to develop characteristics foreign to his true ambitions. He was made into an average man, stripped of his ideals, and forced to work in a field which chilled his personality. This was Peter's problem: he was stuck in a life-style which demanded that he stop being Peter.

His life was made up of one bad decision after another. In his twenties, he

developed the attitude that each experience he had encountered in life had been sour. He had no hope for a better life because every circumstance was doomed from the beginning. Even his marriage brought with it issues of low self-esteem and perpetual arguments. Life had no spark, no enthusiasm, no meaning. He was less than a man; he was a statistic, a blue-collar worker with no hope of ever getting out of this mess called life.

Peter felt trapped. He was tired of his life repetitiously playing itself out in a similar fashion day after day, and yet he was afraid to make a break away from the familiar—the life that could be counted on every day to still be there. He wanted to follow his dreams, but resisted the notion because it was too bold and daring. He feared that bad circumstances would be the inevitable outcome if he did break away free from his current situation.

Peter was a religious man. It was his faith in God that gave him the strength to go on. "Help me, God. Help me," he murmured under his breath while relaxing in the break room. "Help me to know the right thing to do. Give me the courage to act."

At noon a customer wandered into the office to place an order for advertisement. Peter took down the information in his usual automated style, smiled at the woman, and told her to have a nice day. The woman stood motionless for several seconds, then she sighed and looked deeply into Peter's eyes. Her eyes were kind, compassionate, and twinkled with an uncommon brilliance. Her face was simple, yet seemed to portray a spirit of joy, strength, and wisdom.

"Is it all right if I share with you a story about a young man?" the customer queried.

Peter felt imposed upon, but politely nodded his head and said that it would be

okay.

"I know a young man who recently went off to war," the woman started. "He was a pilot and was shot down off the coast of France."

"Oh, that's bad," Peter sympathetically chimed. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"Really? Was it bad?" the woman asked. "He did survive the crash, and because he was shot down, he was able to escape detection from the enemy. He turned out being the only soldier from his troop that survived. He made it safely to a camp where he was rescued. But he came down with pneumonia shortly after arriving in camp."

"That's bad," Peter confirmed with absolute sincerity.

"Do you think so?" the customer queried. "Because he was ill, he was discharged from the army. He also met his bride while he was in the hospital. He married after his recovery and went on his honeymoon. But while he and his wife were on their honeymoon, someone stole one-hundred dollars from them."

"I'm really sorry to hear that. It must have been a terrible experience," Peter recalled a similar event from his own life. He felt empathy for the situation. It was awful to have money stolen from you.

Even when it is returned, the memories can allow it to remain a hideous experience.

"I don't think it was bad," said the woman. "They were not hurt by the experience, just frightened, and as it turned out, the man who stole the money from them was an infamous criminal. He was wanted in five countries and the authorities were collectively offering a one-million dollar reward for anyone who could help them locate him. The young man and his wife were later given the reward. A man who had terrorized hundreds of people was apprehended. That was good. If the young

The Customer

by Tiffany Leigh Bratton



Troubled

Melissa Gautreaux

Anger

Anger is a deadly emotion
 Churning in the pit of your stomach
 Thoughts distorted, misconstrued
 Worlds seep out that shouldn't be uttered
 Blood begins to boil
 Tempers flare
 The rational becomes dream-like
 The nightmare never ends
 The brain pushes into overdrive
 Unable to comprehend
 Fighting leads to regret
 Now time is only an enemy
 And there's a loss of a friend

by Matt Bolch

the right time, they would not have had their money stolen from them. They would not have one-million dollars right now, either. All of the events which appeared bad led to something wonderful. It was all good. Everything always is."

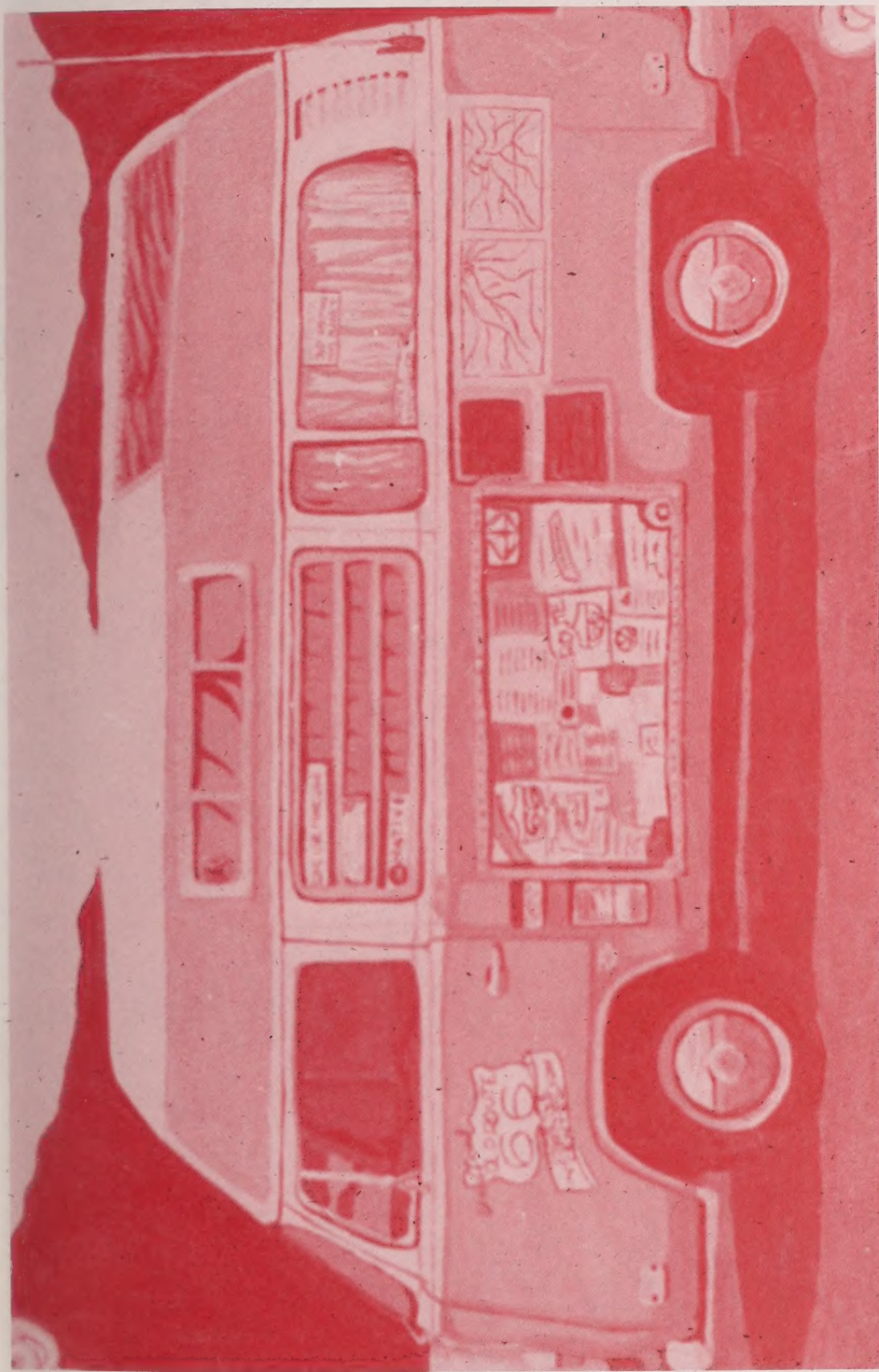
As if on cue, the woman picked up her belongings and walked out the door. Peter blankly stared after her. He chuckled to himself as he turned back to his duties. "How ridiculous," he thought.

As the day persisted, Peter could not get the story out of his mind, especially the part about something bad becoming something good. He slowly began to understand that his life was no different than the young man's. He felt embarrassed by his unyielding insistence to view the worst. For years he had held on to his present circumstances. He did so because he feared that more disagreeable ones might take their place if he attempted to move on to something else. Peter now understood that letting go of a circumstance is recognizing that something good is bound to occur. He began to look upon his own life in a new light. He started to see a faint thread that ran between each experience, bringing him to better situations. He saw hope where before he saw only ruin. Perhaps he could make his past into something good.

Peter went over the orders for advertisement at the conclusion of the day. The slip of paper that had the woman's order on it was blank, except for Peter's initials in the top right hand corner. There was no evidence that the event had even occurred. Peter stared at the slip of paper for several seconds, then he smiled, lifted his arms up in the air, threw his head back, looked at the ceiling, and thanked God. He then turned to his boss and said, "I quit."



Boats *Susie Phillips*



Memories of 66 *Liesle Montgomery*

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